

Casey Co. ATC Principal John Shugars Retiring With 40 ½ Years Experience

Forty and one-half years of experience is rewarding and can be a hallmark for others in understanding the wisdom, character and perseverance it takes to be successful. On June 30, 2004, John Shugars will officially retire as principal of the Casey Co. ATC. All but seven years of his entire service has been in vocational-technical education; twenty years have been spent as a principal. His years of experience will leave him with memories he'll fondly be able to recall. And, as a final tribute, here are some bits of information to impart before he walks out the door for the last time. "I finally got it right so they are going to let me retire," says Shugars.

In addition to his state service, Shugars served as the Scoutmaster of Boy Scout Troop 123 for almost 50 years. He retired from that position in December 2001. Out of the hundreds of young men



John Shugars is custodian of the Beech Bottom One Room School House. It was reconstructed through the efforts of the Casey Co. Retired Teachers Association and is located behind the Casey Co. ATC. KY Tech students helped in the renovation of the school and it is now a museum.

that he mentored during his tenure, there were twenty-two who completed the ultimate in scouting – they each met the criteria to become an Eagle Scout. “Scouting has been more than a great experience. It has been the source of a lot of personal satisfaction and pride,” said Shugars. “Scouts have been my life and everything ties in with that somewhere. I really thank God that I had the opportunity to do it.”

Shugars’ state service began when he got a job working for the Kentucky School for the Deaf (KSD). “I saw some real benefits in working with young people, but one of the most important influences for me was meeting Mr. Robert Baughman, principal of the school,” says Shugars. “He had a real



empathy for kids. He was a real pleasure to be around and he was always looking for something to do to help those kids. That was inspirational to me and something I wanted to emulate.”

When Shugars left the KSD, Mr. H.D. Noe hired him as an agriculture teacher at what was formerly called the

Somerset State Vocational Technical School. There are those to this day that refer to Mr. Noe as the ‘Godfather of Vocational Education’ in the state of Kentucky. “He was the type of person that told you what he thought of you real quick and was good at giving directions,” says Shugars. “He had a concerned expectation of you and I would deliberately do things to try to impress him. A comment from him was about as good as it gets.”

Shugars considers his most important contributions during his tenure to be his service to youth through scouting and KY Tech, as well as placing two new programs in his school – health science and electrical technology. However, the most important ingredient in any school is the student. Shugars has worked with thousands of students over the past forty years and thinks, “many stand out. They have taken their leadership abilities from student organizations and used them to their benefit out in the community. I’m a real club person anyway. Scouts have been my life and everything ties in with that somewhere.”

In addition to being principal, Shugars was honored with the opportunity to serve on the State Governor’s Council for Vocational Education from 1988 to 1996. An important revelation during his board membership was when he attended a State Board for Adult and Technical Education meeting and realized the two entities basically had the same mission. “Both groups really didn’t know and understand each other,” says Shugars. “I decided to see what we could do about having joint meetings to help correct this situation.”

Shugars has had many wide and varied experiences that took him to all corners of the state during his time as a board member, “I think when I worked on the governor’s council I had a chance to see each school,” says Shugars. “It was one of the most maturing experiences because I could see what people were doing. It helped me as a principal because I could bring those types of things back here to this school.”

It takes dedicated individuals to help run a school. Shugars believes his faculty and staff have been instrumental in the success of Casey Co. ATC. Included in that set of individuals is Rosina Bowmer, the Casey Co. ATC executive secretary. She has been his secretary for the twenty years he has been principal of the school.



“I have always admired Mr. Shugars’ commitment in helping students grow into happy, productive adults. He is to be congratulated for the role he played in building young people’s skills, confidence and strength of character. His efforts have helped put many students on the path to achieving their dreams,” says

Bowmer. “It takes a team of committed people to make a school successful. As a valued member of that team, Mr. Shugars has had a lasting influence on our students, staff and faculty. He has been an inspiration in putting students first and that is why we are here!”

Question and Answer Session with John Shugars

Q: What are the qualities that make a good principal?

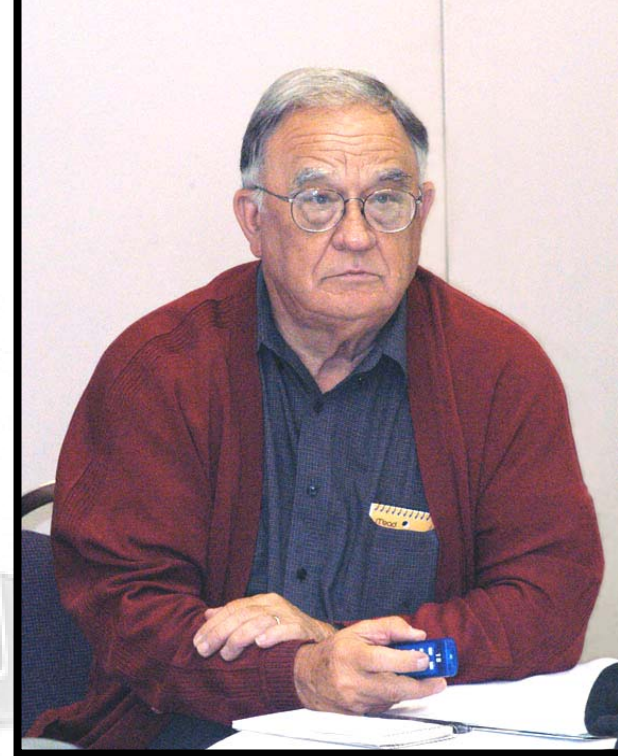
Shugars: The need to understand teachers and community involvement.

Q: What guidance and/or advice would you provide to any new principal within the system?

Shugars: I would say it's important to develop a good relationship with the local superintendent and high school principal. You need those people to get things done. It works both ways and you get included when you are familiar.

Q: Over the years, what do you see as some of the major changes during the time you have been involved in vocational-technical education?

Shugars: There are three main areas that I think provided major changes. The first one was obviously Carl D. Perkins because of the budget. He was the



‘nation’s godfather’ and the Carl D. Perkins Act helped to get technical education where it needed to be. The second is Tech Prep because it helped bring about the blending of academic and technical education programs. And the third is articulation. We in technical education are starting to be recognized because of this initiative. This has given us a shot in the arm to make us legitimate. We must continue to work toward getting academic credit for technical programs. This is critical.

Q: In your opinion, how does an ATC integrate into the community?

Shugars: It’s important to join all the civic organizations; request to attend superintendents’ meetings and accept all committee assignments from the superintendent. Inside our ATC community, it’s important to perfect an advisory committee that will give you support, influence and constructive criticism. You need that to grow



Top photo: Health Science Instructor Amy Wells and John Shugars.
Bottom photo: Automotive Technology Instructor Darrell Barlow and Mr. Shugars look over motorized cars.

and prosper. This needs to be a reality situation. When you get people from different fields, you will get the pie in the sky kind of stuff.

Q: What do you consider to be the most important issue facing vocational-technical education today?

Shugars: Budgeting – we have got to get recognition at the table when the money is given out. You can only go with the speed of your budget.

Q: What do you consider to be the positive influences that student organizations have on vocational-technical education participants?

Shugars: Leadership, confidence, a desire to achieve, and community contributions.

Q: What do you think people will remember you by?

Shugars: It would be the contributions for youth in our community. If people know about John Shugars, it will be because of Eagle Scouts and KY Tech.

Editor's Note: In addition to the information contained in this good news story, we pulled some interesting facts from a recent full-page article about John Shugars published in The Casey County News.

The Liberty/Casey County Chamber of Commerce honored Shugars in 2003 as its Educator of the Year and in 2001 as the Citizen of the Year. The Casey County Alumni Association inducted Shugars into its Hall of Fame in 2003.

Shugars and his wife, Carolee, are both educators. They have two children – John D. and Jennifer, a daughter-in law, Melissa, and two granddaughters, Ashley and Olivia.